

What Students Need to Know

The April–September 2025 Transition Period

In spring and summer this year, we will have two concurrent formats of the ACT. In April, digital administrations shifted to the new “enhanced” version, which has a **shorter testing time** and makes the Science test optional. Meanwhile, pencil-and-paper administrations will continue to use the old format until September, when all ACTs will be updated to the new version (including international ACTs). Due to the limited availability of seating for digital ACTs and the potential for technical issues, many students are opting for the more reliable pencil-and-paper test.

A Tale of Two ACTs

The shorter, enhanced ACT covers the **same content** as the older exam. The primary differences are **changes in timing and the number of questions**. The new ACT offers about 20% more time per question. This more generous timing is a welcome relief to many students, as the exam’s difficulty has largely relied on time pressure. Further, the smaller number of questions will reduce the strain on students’ stamina.

Experimental questions are incorporated throughout the new ACT. These questions are not scored. On the old test, these questions were gathered into a single extra section at the end of the exam.

OLD ACT			NEW ACT			
	QUESTIONS	TIME (MINUTES)		QUESTIONS	TIME (MINUTES)	DIFFERENCE IN PACING
ENGLISH	75	45	ENGLISH	50 (10 UNSCORED)	35	17%
MATH	60	60	MATH	45 (4 UNSCORED)	50	11%
READING	40	35	READING	36 (9 UNSCORED)	40	27%
SCIENCE	40	35	SCIENCE	40 (6 UNSCORED)	40	13%

Switching to a New Superscore

With Science becoming an optional add-on (like the Writing test), Science will no longer be part of students’ Composite scores. The new ACT uses **only English, Math, and Reading scores to calculate the Composite**. This change also affects ACT Superscoring. Starting in September (or earlier for any student who takes an ACT with the new format before then), ACT Superscores will no longer include Science scores in their calculations.

The Optional Science Section and Its Impact on Admissions

So far, all colleges that have updated their admissions policies have declared the ACT Science section optional. These colleges include Yale, Brown, Stanford, Harvard, and the University of Georgia. This policy may differ for specific STEM degrees, however, and students hoping to attend a Florida school should take ACT Science as a requirement for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program. Before registering for the enhanced ACT, contact the admissions offices at schools to which you’re applying to determine whether you need a Science score; if you’re not certain, it’s safer to take the optional Science section.